



Department of Pacific Affairs

Developing Papua New Guinea's Tourism Sector

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Introduction

This paper focuses on tourism in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and a range of challenges that hinder the progress of tourism development. Over the years, tourism has seen continued growth and increasing expansion to become one of the leading and fastest growing economic sectors across the globe (Mihalic 2014; Rayel et al. 2014; SPTO 2018). Modern tourism is directly connected to developmental progress and includes an increasing number of new sites being developed as tourist destinations (Mihalic 2014; Rayel et al. 2014; UNWTO 2016). With its vast and untouched natural environment, PNG has a great deal of potential as a tourist destination (Rayel et al. 2014). However, tourism visitation to PNG in the last few years has been relatively low compared to smaller Pacific Island countries (Rayel et al. 2014; Sumb 2017). In 2006, the PNG Tourism Promotion Authority (PNG TPA) released the *Papua New Guinea Tourism Sector Review and Master Plan (2007–2017)*, the aim of which was to bolster tourism growth. The PNG TPA identified a number of factors that dissuaded potential tourists from visiting such as insufficient infrastructure, concerns about adequate health services and the dangers posed to tourists by criminal activities (Basu 2000; Bhanugopan 2001; PNG TPA 2006; Rayel et al. 2014). The objective of this paper is to investigate, identify and discuss the factors that deter tourists from visiting PNG.

The data collected for this paper was mostly secondary and analysed using thematic analysis. This paper aims to answer the following research questions: 1. What are some major challenges, trends, issues and opportunities for tourism growth in PNG? 2. How can

these challenges be addressed? 3. What strategies can be used to ensure tourism growth?

This study found that key challenges for tourism growth in PNG are high crime rates, negative media publicity, systematic corruption and a lack of competition in the airline sector. Despite these challenges, PNG has tourism potential that can be developed and marketed to international and domestic tourists.

It is anticipated that this research will make a theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge related to tourism growth. Thus, it is hoped that this study will be useful for tourism operators and destination management organisations. In this way, this study could assist in making gains in the development of PNG as a whole.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part presents background information on PNG and aspects of the country's tourism. The second part canvasses the known challenges to tourism as revealed by a literature review. The third part presents the methodology of the study and its results, followed by a section on the findings. Finally, a conclusion is given.

PART 1: TOURISM IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Background

PNG is located just south of the equator and 160 kilometres north of mainland Australia. The country occupies the eastern part of the world's second-largest island, New Guinea, and shares a border with Indonesia (PNG TPA 2011; Rayel et al. 2014). In 1975, the country gained its independence and became known as the Independent State of Papua New Guinea (Basu, 2000; Kau 2014; PNG TPA 2011).

PNG is divided into four geographic regions, which are broad administrative divisions but important in many functions of government, commercial, sporting and other activities. The four regions and their respective provinces are:

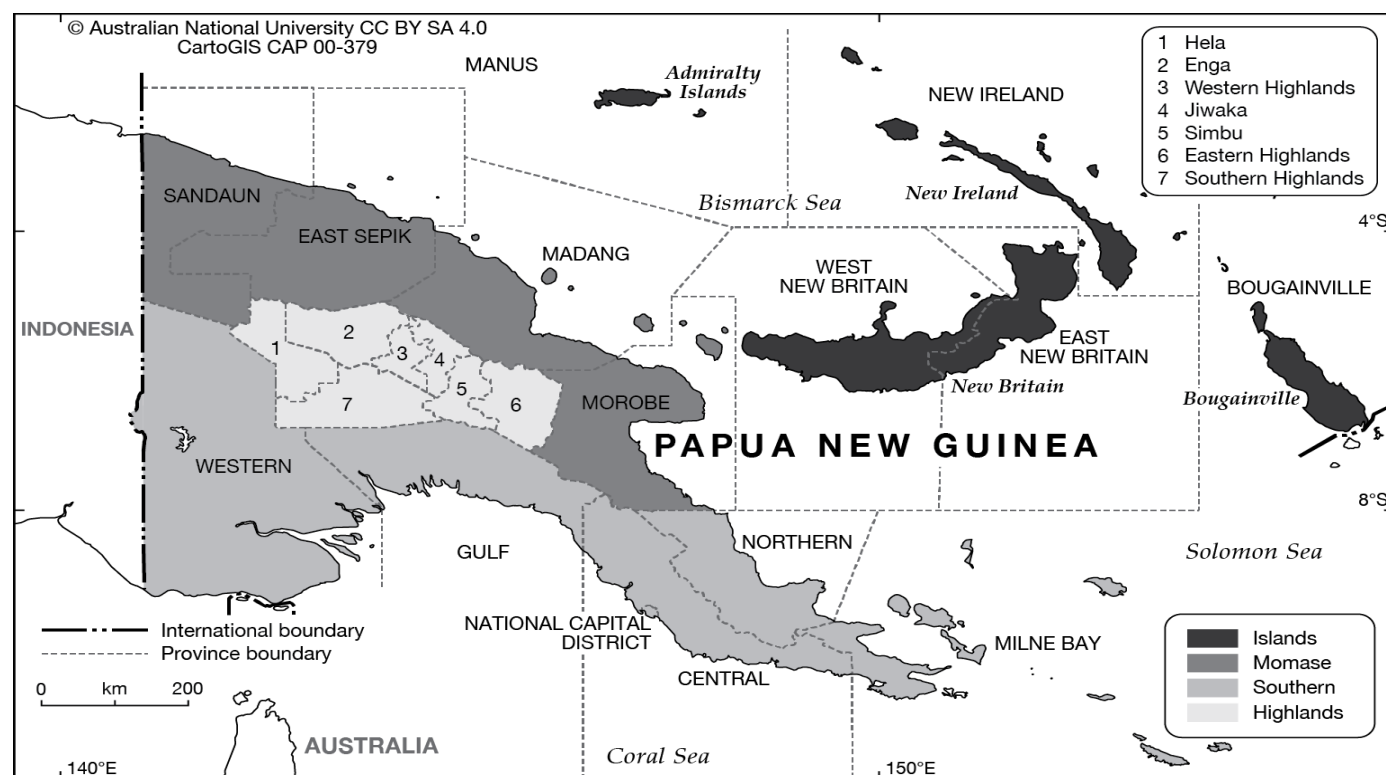
1. Highlands Region: Simbu, Eastern Highlands, Enga, Hela, Jiwaka, Southern Highlands and Western Highlands.
2. Niugini Islands Region: East New Britain, Manus, New Ireland, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (North Solomons) and West New Britain.
3. Momase Region: East Sepik, Madang, Morobe and West Sepik (Sandaun).
4. Southern Region: Central, Gulf, Milne Bay, Northern Province (Oro), Western (Fly) and the National Capital District.

The nation has 22 provinces, including the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and the National Capital District (Kau 2014; PNG National Parliament 2016). Each province is divided into one or more districts, which in turn are divided into one or more local-level government areas (see Figure 1).

PNG has a tropical monsoon climate with wet and dry seasons, though the climate differs from one area to another. The country's thousands of tribes and cultures speak over 850 different languages (George and Millett 1984; Pickford 2005). Tok Pisin (Melanesian Pidgin) is widely spoken and most people are multilingual: they can communicate both in their vernacular and Tok Pisin. Few people can speak English. PNG has both rugged mountains and deep terrain, making travel by road difficult in some places. Also, over 70 per cent of the country is covered in rainforest (Basu 2000; ETTF and ATIBT 2018; Mongabay 2011; World Wide Fund for Nature 2020) and swamp forest is found in the lowland areas, particularly in the Western and the Sepik Provinces. Sago palm is the staple food of the people living in these provinces. The major rivers of PNG are also found in these provinces: the mighty Sepik River in the north and the Fly River in the south, both of which are navigable for more than 800 kilometres (Hartemink and Bregt 2008; Ningal et al. 2008; Wearing and McDonald 2002).

The country had a total population of approximately 8 million people in 2018 and has been growing at an average rate of 2.2 per cent annually since

Figure 1. Map of PNG showing its regions and provinces



Source: ANU CartoGIS.

2003 (SPC Statistics for Development Division 2020). The capital of PNG, Port Moresby, is the country's most populous city with approximately 450,000 people (National Capital District Commission 2018). The second largest city is the industrial city of Lae in Morobe Province; other major cities include Mount Hagen and Kokopo (Ningal et al. 2008; PNG TPA 2011).

The majority of the country's population, approximately 85 per cent, live in rural areas and depend on subsistence farming (Bhanugopan 2001). Village people grow enough food to sustain themselves and sometimes sell the surplus in local markets for an income (Basu 2000; Bhanugopan 2001; Rayel et al. 2014). Less than 15 per cent of the population live in urban areas, work and earn a regular income (Basu 2000; Bhanugopan 2001). It is estimated that only three per cent of the country's land area is owned by the state — mostly towns and cities — and the remaining 97 per cent is owned by local people (Basu 2000; Bhanugopan 2001; ETTF and ATIBT 2018; Mongabay 2011; World Wide Fund for Nature 2020). Landowners can be a community, tribe, clan or family. Customary land rights include the right to all natural resources, including forests; consequently, landowner groups are legally entitled to be involved in decisions concerning the management of their forest land and any mining exploration (ibid.).

The major economic sectors in PNG are agriculture and livestock, forestry, mining and petroleum, tourism and hospitality, fisheries and marine resources, manufacturing, retailing and wholesaling, building and construction, transport, telecommunications, finance and business trade (United Nations Development Programme PNG 2014).

A brief political overview of PNG

Although PNG has a Westminster parliamentary system as a colonial legacy, the way it operates is Melanesian, with frequent motions of no confidence and weaker parties than are seen in other countries (Regan 2017). Another feature of PNG politics is how the delivery of services is affected by the way national government constituency development funds are spent by members of parliament (Regan 2017; Sali 2018). In terms of providing good roads, airports and other infrastructure to attract tourists, the country's combination of rugged terrain, remoteness and difficulties in how funding for major projects works creates a major stumbling block to improvements (ibid.). Further, it is important to acknowledge the

Bougainville crisis, which began in 1989 and lasted for nine years (Connell 2005). The crisis affected many people, with properties destroyed, approximately 20,000 deaths and thousands of people displaced. Tourist arrivals dropped as a result (Banks 2008; Connell 2005; Noonan 23/2/2018).

Cultural attractions

PNG has some of the world's most fascinating tourist attractions that have the potential for international tourists' gaze (Bhanugopan 2001; Kau 2014; Milne 1991; Rayel et al. 2014; Sali 2018). Marketable tourist adventures are based on authentic, memorable experiences, and for PNG these includes cultural offerings from over a thousand different tribes (George and Millett 1984; Pickford 2005; Sali 2018). These special experiences are offered in a range of tours, particularly village tours and cultural festivals (Imbal 2009; Kau 2014; PNG TPA 2006). The culture of PNG is very diverse, as indicated by the presence of over 850 different languages in the country (Pickford 2005). Styles of cultural expression, such as carving, dance, singing, ornamentation, architecture and more, differ significantly throughout the country and are recognised as belonging to the people of particular localities (Bhanugopan 2001; Kau 2014; PNG TPA 2006).

The cultures of indigenous people in most parts of PNG are still practised today, particularly in remote and rural villages (Imbal 2010; Kau 2014). This is due to extremely rugged mountains, thick jungles, swamps and the sea, which make it hard for external influences such as education, religion and infrastructure to take hold quickly (Bhanugopan 2001; Douglas 1998; Imbal 2010; PNG TPA 2006). For centuries, links between PNG's various societies were restricted, limiting the growth of a common language and contact with the modern world. This has given rise to many unique and vibrant cultures and traditions that have been mostly unaffected for centuries (Bhanugopan 2001; Pickford 2005).

From the tourist perspective, PNG is the last great frontier on earth (Basu 2000; PNG TPA 2006). In many parts of the country, the authentic indigenous culture is still maintained and preserved today (Basu 2000; Bhanugopan 2001; Imbal 2010; Kau 2014). The country has developed its own traditional lifestyles that are vibrant and incomparable. Whilst acknowledging the cultural diversity that exists worldwide, PNG is often thought of as one of the last surviving places on

the planet where cultural authenticity can be found. For culture-based tourism, the iconic product of PNG is its people and their traditional culture (Bhanugopan 2001).

However, Imbal (2009) and Basu (2000) stated in their studies that in some parts of the country, traditional culture is declining rapidly due to socio-economic developments (Hiroko and Luke 2013). According to Imbal (2010), there are two perspectives regarding the sustainability and management of cultural tourism in PNG. The first is the importance of the preservation, conservation and sustainability of the indigenous culture, and second, the efforts by tourism stakeholders to develop, market and maintain cultural values alongside modern influence (ibid.). The challenge is to maintain and sustain the indigenous culture both as a tourism product and as a means of preserving the culture (ibid.).

Furthermore, many people in PNG, especially in the younger generations, are rapidly losing language competence in their traditional language. In addition to languages, traditional cultures have also begun to disappear in some places (Hiroko and Luke 2013). For instance, some parts of the PNG social system previously involved the strict separation of men and women, with men sleeping in men's houses and women sleeping in separate garden houses with the small children (ibid.). However, this trend is declining and as a result, men's and women's knowledge and skills in ceremonies are not being fully passed on to the next generation. Thus, both language and culture are being lost (ibid.). This is due to socio-economic developments, religion and education (Basu 2000). Some religions preach against local people taking part in cultural activities (Hanson 2012).

The PNG government has recognised the challenge of maintaining the cultural values of indigenous people, and so has developed and promoted cultural festivals held annually in most centres in PNG (PNG TPA 2016). This allows people to showcase their cultural identities, customs and beliefs through dance and *sing-sings* (PNG traditional gathering) (ibid.). It also provides a wonderful opportunity for tourists to see the many different cultures of PNG come together in an array of colours and passion (ibid.). The Goroka and Mount Hagen shows are world famous, but also notable are the Canoe Festival in Alotau, the Yam Festival in the Trobriand Islands and the week-long Malagan Festival in Kavieng (ibid.).

Natural attractions

According to the ETTF and ATIBT's Timber Trade Portal (2018), PNG has some of the last untouched and unspoiled rainforests on the globe (Basu 2000). The total forest area of PNG is approximately 34 million hectares, more than 70 per cent of its total land area (ibid.). This has offered a significant base for tourism development in the country (Basu 2000; ETTF and ATIBT 2018; Mongabay 2011; World Wide Fund for Nature 2020).

In addition, PNG has almost 600 smaller islands and coral reefs that contribute to a geographically diverse land area of almost 463,000 square kilometres, with landscapes inclusive of high mountains, heavily forested lowlands, savannah, swamps, coastal plains, picturesque islands, active volcanoes and coral reefs (Bhanugopan 2001; Milne 1991).

The Highlands of PNG are formed from a rugged mountain range with several peaks in excess of 4000 metres running the length of the mainland (Milne 1991; Ningal et al. 2008; Rayel et al. 2014). The fertile mountain valleys are home to an abundance of fresh vegetables such as cabbage, carrot, broccoli and sweet potato (*kaukau* in Tok Pisin), the staple food of the region. People there live in small communities with their own languages and customs and support each other in cultural events such as bride-price, funerals and other events (Bhanugopan 2001; Milne 1991; PNG TPA 2011; Rayel et al. 2014; Wearing and McDonald 2002).

These events attract a small number of tourists to the region to enjoy a range of activities such as adventures, village tours, sightseeing, relaxation and diving (Douglas 1998; PNG TPA 2006). Many tourists travel by plane to more remote tourism sites. For example, one of the country's key attractions is the famous Kokoda Track, also known as the Kokoda Trail, which goes from Port Moresby in the south to Owers' Corner then Kokoda village in the north (Kokoda Track Foundation 2006; PNG TPA 2006; Wearing and McDonald 2002). The trail is famous because it is where Australian soldiers battled against Japanese Imperial forces during World War II. The track extends for 60 miles and can be visited and trekked with tour operators. The height of the trail is over 7000 feet above sea level. Tourists should only trek this trail during the dry season, however, as the wet season brings a higher risk of diseases. Every year, the Kokoda Track attracts a good number of Australian tourists because of its historical links (Kokoda Track Foundation 2006).

Another famous adventure tourism site in PNG is Mount Wilhelm at 4509 metres, or some 14,000 feet above sea level, which offers an iconic trekking experience for tourists. The hike can be undertaken by fit bushwalkers and takes climbers to the summit of the highest mountain in PNG, with spectacular views both north and south. In the local language, the mountain is known as Enduwa Kombuglu (Hope 1976; PNG TPA 2016).

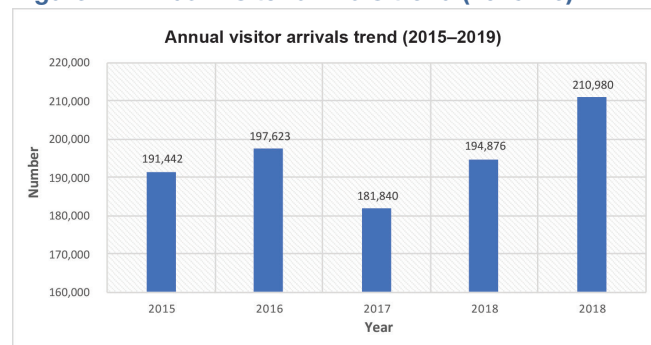
PNG has several conservation areas established mainly for research and conservation purposes that are also unique tourist attractions. The botanical garden within the city of Lae is an extensive rainforest jungle filled with amazing tropical flora and fauna. This site provides an opportunity for tourists to experience a taste of wilderness within the city managed by the PNG Forest Research Institute, a government organisation that conducts studies on the sustainable management and wise use of forest resources. The botanical garden also offers scientific information for the management of PNG's forest resources through research activities (PNG TPA 2016; ACP Forenet 14/11/2011). Similarly, Moitaka Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the most popular tourist attractions in PNG. It is located just a few miles from the heart of Port Moresby, so access is quite stress-free and easy. The sanctuary is a great place for nature enthusiasts, with its different collections of local fauna, including some of the largest crocodiles in the country, the popular birds of paradise and other species that live inside the park (Genorupa and Raga 2001; Kau 2014; Paga Hill Estate 27/11/2017; PNG TPA 2006). PNG also has the Port Moresby Nature Park and the Port Moresby Adventure Park, popular tourism sites located within the city (Paga Hill Estate 27/11/2017).

Tourism trends

PNG received approximately 210,000 international visitors in 2019 after experiencing drops in 2017 and 2018. This was an increase of eight per cent, or an additional 16,000 arrivals to the country. There was a 12 per cent increase in holiday travellers arriving by air (PNG TPA 2019). The visiting family and friends, business and employment categories also recorded growth, while meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions and others slightly dropped in 2019 compared to the previous year. The healthy growth in the holiday market may have been due to PNG TPA's efforts marketing PNG's unique cultural tourism products, including the Kokoda Track, which recorded an increase of six per cent compared to 2018. Cruise

tourists also boosted tourist arrivals to the country (PNG TPA 2019; see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Annual visitor arrivals trend (2015–19)



Source. Taken from a larger chart on PNG's annual visitor arrivals trends (PNG TPA 2019).

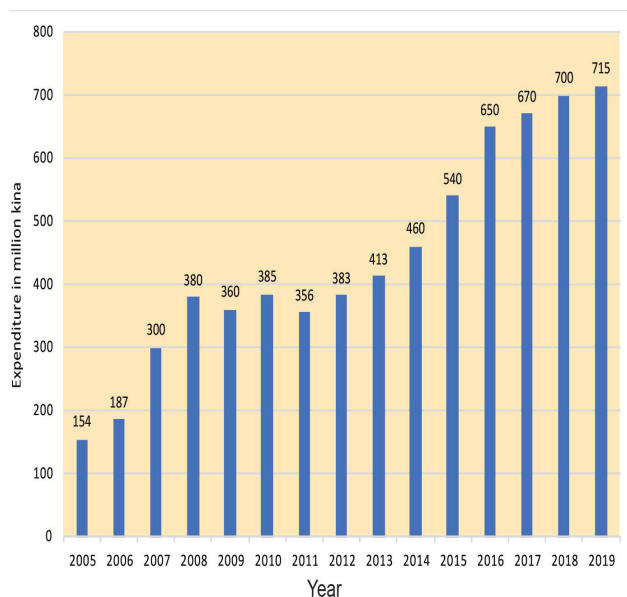
Tourism receipts

In 2019, visitors' total expenditures were estimated to be K1.5 billion (AU\$654,847,625.95), an increase of seven per cent compared to the estimated K1.4 billion spent by visitors in 2018. Of this total expenditure, an estimated of K715 million went into the PNG economy compared to the K700 million spent by tourists in 2018, an increase of two per cent or K15 million additional spending (PNG TPA 2019; see Figure 3). The increase in expenditure by tourists was a direct result of the increase in holiday arrivals and their lengths of stay in the country. Tourists spent their money on tours, airfare, accommodation, food and beverages, entertainment and transport (PNG TPA 2019). It is recognised that tourism is a sustainable industry with positive benefits, such as alleviating poverty, boosting infrastructure development and generating job opportunities and income, with a by-product of protecting of natural resources (Bhanugopan 2001; N'Drower 2014; Wearing et al. 2010). Tourism development has been seen as a powerful force for regional development (Basu 2000; Rayel et al. 2014), with many anticipated economic benefits through 'scale economies/mass tourism or system economies/quality tourism' (Rayel et al. 2014:6). However, the positive effects on employment and the generation of hard currency can also create some serious negative effects, such as inflation, a reduction of quality of life and local residents needing to compete with tourists for the same resources (Rayel et al. 2014). This also applies to the environment and culture, with tourism growth's associated issues of environmental degradation and the loss of societal and cultural values (N'Drower 2014). Furthermore, 'economic leakages' may be created due

to the constant use of imported goods to meet tourists' requirements and the acceptance of multinational companies to operate tourism-related businesses in PNG (Rayel et al. 2014).

Maximising economic potential while minimising the negative impacts of tourism has been the main concern of planners and policymakers in most countries where tourism has become the key player in the development process (N'Drower 2014). Community awareness about tourism's role in achieving economic prosperity prompts their participation in tourism development (Bhanugopan 2001; N'Drower 2014).

Figure 3. Estimated visitor expenditure incurred by foreign visitors

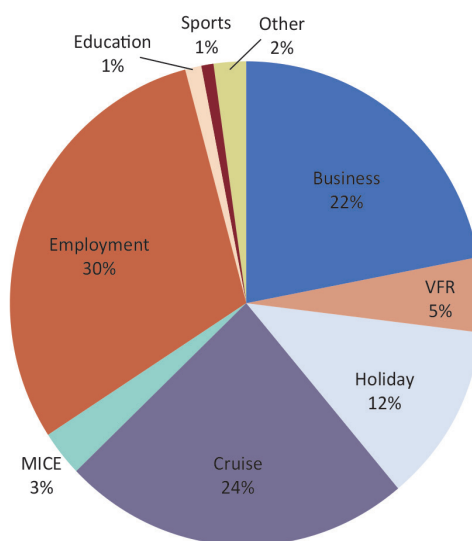


Source: PNG TPA 2019.

Purpose of visit

According to PNG TPA (2019), the majority of visitors to PNG are for business and employment (52 per cent), with only 12 per cent for holiday and 36 per cent for other purposes. Most business visitors travel to PNG solely for business interests, not as tourists. The genuine 'visitors' to PNG are holiday travellers, spending money on tours, visiting attractions and participating in other holiday activities. Thus, the challenge for PNG TPA is to attract more of these holiday visitors (Sumb 2019), as typical business visitors stay in hotels, go to business meetings or conferences and have little or no free time for tours and other tourism activities. The breakdown of visitor's purposes has seen some consistency in the last couple of years (Sumb 2019; see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Arrivals distribution by purpose of visit in 2019



MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions), VFR (visiting family and friends). Source: PNG TPA 2019.

PNG's key tourism source markets

Tourism growth in the last 10 years has been positive and the holiday segment for most of the source markets, such as Australia, New Zealand, Oceania, China and Japan, has done well. However, due to safety and security issues as well as travel warnings by foreign missions around PNG's 2017 national election, incoming international traveller numbers were limited. After the election, visitor arrival numbers picked up again in 2018, as PNG TPA, in partnership with industry operators, developed new tourism products and carried out more marketing and promotional activities in overseas markets (PNG TPA 2019). The increase was also attributed to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting hosted by PNG, which attracted many international visitors (ibid.).

The PNG government plans to trial additional Air Niugini flights on its Japan, Philippines and China routes in the near future, which may boost tourist numbers in coming years. In the next five years (2020–24), international visitor arrivals are anticipated to grow at an average rate of eight per cent annually, and it is estimated that by 2024 over 300,000 visitors will have visited PNG, injecting a projected K3 billion into the economy (ibid.). Table 1 shows visitor arrivals from key countries in 2019.

Table 1. PNG's top five tourism source markets

No.	Countries	Total visitor arrivals from Jan–Dec 2019
1	Australia	10,3440
2	New Zealand	9191
3	Oceania	7175
4	China	14,755
5	Japan	3924

Source: Taken from a larger chart on PNG's key tourism source markets (PNG TPA 2019).

Annual holiday arrivals from the Chinese market

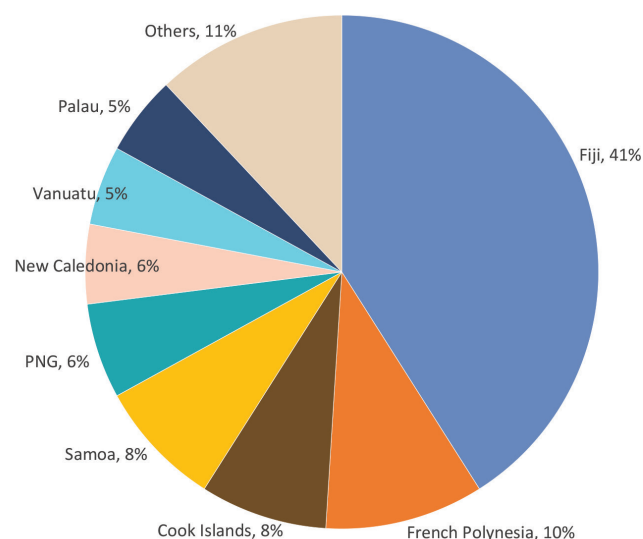
China is now an important emerging world tourism source market (Tretheway and Mak 2006). According to United Nations World Tourism Organization forecasts, China was estimated to have 100 million outbound travellers by 2020. Thus, there is huge potential in tourism from China (ibid.) and PNG TPA plans to tap into the Chinese market by carrying out marketing activities in Chinese language and introducing a direct flight from Port Moresby to Shanghai to boost tourist arrivals from the market. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the short-term outlook looks gloomy for PNG, but the long-term plan remains in place (PNG TPA 2019).

Tourism in the Pacific

Tourism in the Pacific has been doing well. According to a report by the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (2018), 2018 was a good year for the regional tourism sector, with a total of 3.16 million visitor arrivals. Of these, 2.14 million were by air, 1.6 per cent more than in 2017, while sea arrivals, mainly by cruise ship (day visitors) were at 1.02 million. The report also noted that Pacific tourism receipts or visitor spending in destinations contributed US\$3.8 billion, or 11.1 per cent, to the region's gross domestic product and generated 131,010 jobs, placing the tourism sector as a key driver of economic growth and employment creation for the Pacific Islands (ibid.).

However, the number of tourists arriving in PNG is less than in other Pacific Island countries. Tourist arrivals in PNG are low relative to the size of its population and land mass. By contrast, Fiji is small in

land mass and population, but is the leading tourism destination in the Pacific (Rayel et al. 2014; SPTO 2018; see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Tourist arrivals in the Pacific

Source: Figures taken from SPTO 2018.

According to Pipike (2012), tourism products in both Fiji and PNG show that both countries have almost the same tourism resources on offer. However, Pipike (ibid.) identified that Fiji has developed niche tourism products — such as themed holidays, including weddings, honeymoons and health and spa (wellness and pampering) — giving Fiji a competitive advantage over PNG.

Pipike (ibid.) further states that Fiji has clearly recognised and expanded access to its natural resources that have the potential to be tourism attractions. Fiji has built basic infrastructure for tourists such as water supply, roads and communication networks, as well as facilities such as airports and parks. This infrastructure has in turn attracted the private sector to build world-class hotels (ibid.).

The wide use of communication through the internet and social media has boosted the advertising and marketing of Fijian tourism. For instance, 'Bula Fiji' commercial billboards can be seen on screens in major international airports such as in Narita, Japan. Similarly, Fiji's tour packages are advertised on many television stations abroad. For instance, New Zealand television companies such as TV One, Prime and Choice TV promote Fiji's tourism products. For New Zealand and Australian tourists, this raises top-of-mind awareness of Fiji as a tourism destination (ibid.).

More importantly, Fiji is accessible daily by different international airlines (Pipike 2012). Fijian hospitality is also an important part of the country's tourism image, making it one of the more popular destinations for a holiday in the Pacific (ibid.).

PART 2: KEY KNOWN CHALLENGES TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN PNG

The following are key challenges to tourism development in PNG as revealed by a literature review.

Safety and security

Law and order is a major concern for tourism development (Dinnen 1997, 2017; Sumb 2019) featured prominently in social media public forums, newspapers and other media outlets in PNG, where local people express concerns around criminal violence, rape, murder, pick-pocketing, stealing, bag snatching and armed hold-ups (Bhanugopan 2001; Dinnen 1997; Kau 2014; Nanau 13/3/2020; Rayel et al. 2014; Sali 2018; Sumb 2017, 2019). These issues started to increase between 1996 and 1998, when there was a 65 per cent increase in the reported crime rate (Bhanugopan 2001). During the same period, 232 murders were reported in Port Moresby, 816 serious sexual offences occurred and there were 3,361 robberies and 307 crimes involving firearms (ibid.). The continuing escalation of law and order problems in many areas is a result of the PNG government's inability to address the underlying issues (Dinnen 1997; Sumb 2019); it may also be partly due to a large number of grades 10 and 12 school leavers and unemployed urban youth (Sali 2018; Sumb 2019). Over the years, the general public and the media have protested and petitioned the government to be more responsible in addressing crime committed by poor and disadvantaged members of the community, but little or nothing has been done (Nanau 13/3/2020; Sali 2018; Sumb 2019).

These types of problems have adverse effects on the tourism industry (Dinnen 1997; Sali 2018; Sumb 2019). The media has reported on all types of crime committed in the country, with incidents making headlines both locally and internationally (Dinnen 1997; Nanau 13/3/2020; Sali 2018). Thus, the perception of PNG overseas is that it is a dangerous and unsafe tourist destination (Nalu 9/6/2019). However, Sumb (2019) identified that there is no record of tourists being targeted or kidnapped for ransom as in other countries. Cases where tourists have been victims

of crime in PNG include the 2010 rape of an Australian tourist in Madang (Fenech 18/11/2010), the armed robbery of 20 tourists at Tawali Dive Resort in Alotau in 2018 (Nicholas 31/8/2018) and a photographer from New Zealand being stabbed during a roadside robbery in 2019 (*Asia Pacific Report* 12/6/2019). However, there are many genuine and friendly PNG people who can make a tourist's holiday a positive and memorable experience. In some well-developed countries, there are serious safety and security issues related to political violence and terrorism. Thus, there is no place on earth that is completely crime free and safe (Sali 2018).

Negative media publicity

PNG is at the forefront of negative media publicity, particularly with its two daily newspapers, *The National* and *Post-Courier*. Often, the front page is about murder, tribal fighting, robbery, rape, car theft and armed robbery, which may cause a negative perception of PNG as a destination (ibid.). This also includes international media organisations such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, whose news coverage of PNG has been identified as limited and could contribute to a negative image of PNG in Australia (Martha et al. 2011). This creates a challenge for PNG TPA to market PNG as a desirable tourist destination, because the media sometimes exaggerates their news coverage by reporting unsubstantiated facts (Bhanugopan 2001; Imbal 2009; Kau 2014; Nalu 9/6/2019; Rayel et al. 2014). Additionally, today's social media communication platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and online news transmit any news globally in seconds (Nalu 9/6/2019). For PNG tourism, negative media publicity is the main factor that has tarnished the image of the country for potential international tourists (Bhanugopan 2001; Imbal 2009; Milne 1991; Nalu 9/6/2019; Rayel et al. 2014). Thus, the perception of PNG among the international source markets is that of a very dangerous and unsafe place (ibid.).

However, Fiji is the leading tourism destination in the Pacific region despite its history of political unrest and internal conflicts, such as a military coup in 2006 (Narayan 2006; Sumb 2017). Also, it is worth noting that Bali remains popular despite the bombing in 2002 that killed 202 people, mostly Australians and Indonesians (Pambudi et al. 2009). These countries still successfully promote tourism. Hence, PNG's media

platforms may be able to assist with improving its image (Nalu 9/6/2019; Sumb 2017, 2019).

The high cost of goods and services

The cost of most goods and services in PNG is high (Howes 2/3/2018). This includes the cost of accommodation, tours, meals and airfares (Bhanugopan 2001; Howes 2/3/2018; Lawrence 2017; Milne 1991; Pipike 2012; PNG TPA 2011; Rayel et al. 2014). PNG is only accessible by two airline companies, Air Niugini and PNG Air (Lawrence 2017). This creates a huge challenge for tourists to visit PNG. Air Niugini, Qantas and Virgin Australia operate in the Australian sector with code-share arrangements that allow travellers to buy tickets to PNG through the Virgin and Qantas websites, while Air Niugini is the sole air carrier to the Asia-Pacific Island market such as Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Japan, Hong Kong, Fiji and Solomon Islands (Batten et al. 2009; Lawrence 2017). For a long time, an effective monopoly by Air Niugini resulted in high airfares to PNG (Batten et al. 2009; Lawrence 2017; Pipike 2012; PNG TPA 2011). In contrast, Fiji is accessible daily by multiple different international airlines such as Air New Zealand, Korean Air, Continental, Jetstar Airways, Pacific Blue, Air Niugini, Air Vanuatu, Air Caledonia and Air Pacific (Pipike 2012). We are now in the 21st century and unfortunately little or no improvement has been made regarding the cost of air travel to PNG, as reported in the *Papua New Guinea Tourism Sector Review and Master Plan (2007–2017)*. This chronic issue is yet to be addressed, and may be due to PNG's location in the Pacific region, where most goods and services are expensive for several reasons, including the remoteness of the region, reliance on foreign aid and inadequate economic activities (ibid.). One option would be to allow competition in the air transport sector, but successive PNG governments have done nothing to encourage competition (Batten et al. 2009). The closure of some small airports and airfields has also hindered tourists' travel to remote tourism sites (Howes et al. 2014).

Lack of sufficient infrastructure

Infrastructure is an umbrella term for the many activities, basic structures and facilities necessary for a country to function efficiently (Lawrence 2017; Sali 2018). Infrastructure includes public utilities such as buildings, transport, energy resources, roads, telecommunications, water supply, ports and airports (Imbal 2009; Lawrence 2017; PNG TPA 2011).

According to Imbal (2009), the greatest challenge for the PNG government is improving the country's infrastructure. Due to its geography, PNG's rural areas are very difficult to access (Sali 2018). Roads built during the colonial period have deteriorated and are in poor condition (Bhanugopan 2001; Imbal 2009; Lawrence 2017; Sali 2018), making travel complicated for tourists who want to visit remote tourist sites. According to Lawrence (2017), more than 75 per cent of national, provincial and district roads become inaccessible at some time during the year due to flooding, landslides and a historical lack of maintenance. This means that tourists could become trapped in a remote location or are unable to get to it in the first place. Thus, most of PNG's potential tourist attractions are inaccessible to tourists (Lawrence 2017; Sali 2018).

In 2014, some tourists suggested the PNG government should fix the roads not only for tourists but also for the local communities (PNG TPA 2014). They said that if the government could provide the basic infrastructure needs of PNG, people would see positive improvements in tourism and other economic activities in the country (Lawrence 2017; PNG TPA 2011, 2014; Sali 2018). Since that suggestion was made, only 25 per cent of the roads are in better condition (Lawrence 2017).

Furthermore, approximately 60 per cent of the population of PNG live on 6500 kilometres of coastline and waterways, some without road access. The main form of transport in these areas is by sea, but coastal shipping services are limited and little attention is paid to safety at sea. This has resulted in deaths due to the sinking of overloaded boats and ferries and many people die every year (Lawrence 2017).

Some rural villages in PNG also lack basic services such as electricity, a clean water supply, an airstrip, accommodation facilities and health services (ibid.). As for the telecommunication sector, 67 per cent of people are within reach of mobile phone coverage, but some places still have little mobile coverage. This is mainly due to challenges extending the mobile networks in remote and mountainous terrains with low population densities (Highet et al. 2019).

Travel warnings posted by foreign countries

Travel warnings posted by foreign countries have a huge impact on the tourism industry in PNG. Foreign missions' advice to their citizens is that PNG is a high

risk area to visit in terms of violent crime, health issues and a lack of basic infrastructure (Sumb 2017). For instance, the New Zealand High Commission in PNG offered these precautions to its citizens:

New Zealanders in PNG should exercise a high degree of personal security awareness at all times, especially in public places and areas frequented by foreigners. No resistance should be given if you are the victim of an armed robbery or carjacking, as this could lead to an escalation in violence. Avoid walking alone during the day and especially at night, and avoid displaying visible signs of wealth, such as jewellery and electronic items. Isolated public areas such as golf courses, beaches and parks can be dangerous. New Zealanders travelling outside major urban areas in PNG, especially to more isolated areas, should seek local advice before beginning their journey. Tourist facilities outside major towns are limited. Travel plans should be left with friends, relatives or reliable local contacts. We recommend double-checking your travel insurance to ensure you will be covered in the event of rescue or medical evacuation (New Zealand High Commission in PNG 2020).

This travel warning posted by New Zealand's High Commission is based on current issues in PNG that are seen as possible threats to New Zealand travellers. Such issues include seismic activities, civil unrest, armed hold-ups and health risks (ibid.). This is just one example, and Australia, the US and European countries post similar travel warnings advising their citizens who are in PNG or planning to visit to exercise a high degree of caution (PNG TPA 2019).

Health risks are a concern for some travellers

PNG is located in the tropical zone and its people are prone to tropical diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhoea and other infectious diseases (Bhanugopan 2001; Connell 1997; Gware 12/2/2020; World Bank 2011). In addition, PNG's health sector is experiencing a string of major issues, including a rising healthcare worker crisis with its aging staff (World Bank 2011). This is a concern for the PNG National Department of Health. Over the last 35 years, there have been little or no improvements in the health sector in PNG, and health statistics from the past decade are very disappointing. For example, rates of

maternal and infant mortality are high, and traditional communicable diseases, adding up to about 60 per cent of the total disease burden, remain unacceptably high (ibid.). This is a concern for tourists as they might be infected while in the country (Bhanugopan 2001; Connell 1997; Howes et al. 2014; Gware 12/2/2020). Thus, PNG needs quality healthcare facilities and an adequate number of well-trained nurses and doctors (Bhanugopan 2001; Connell 1997; Gware 12/2/2020; World Bank 2011).

Furthermore, the recent outbreak of COVID-19 is a major health issue affecting tourism in PNG and around the world. As a result, the accommodation sector will have fewer tourists, airlines might not sell their seats and tourist arrivals in PNG might decline (Loop 30/1/2020). According to the World Health Organisation (2020), the outbreak of coronavirus was first detected in the city of Wuhan in the Hubei province of China. From 31 December 2019 through 26 February, there was a total of 80,239 confirmed cases globally, 7778 confirmed cases in China and 2666 deaths, with 34 deaths outside of China, as COVID-19 spread to 24 countries around the world (ibid.). To contain the spread of the virus, safety measures were put in place restricting the movement of people in and out of Wuhan, including on flights, trains and buses (ibid.). Other countries have also put safety measures in place, such as stopping incoming flights from Asian countries. For example, PNG's Minister for Immigration and Border Security Westly Nukundj issued a warning to all travellers entering PNG that immigration will be very strict on the movement of people coming from China and all other Asian ports (Loop 26/1/2020). In addition, Prime Minister James Marape declared state of emergency and lockdown from 23 March to 6 April after the country's first positive COVID-19 case was reported on 17 March involving a 45-year-old male foreign mineworker in Lae. The emergency procedures included people not being allowed to travel from district to district or province to province, the shutting of all schools and non-essential businesses and only vital services such as shops, banks and hospitals remaining open. All international and domestic flights were grounded (Radio New Zealand 24/3/2020). After the 14-day shutdown, a second positive COVID-19 case was reported in East New Britain Province on 7 April involving a local 40-year-old woman. In response, East New Britain Province was put on lockdown for

21 days and the country's state of emergency extended for two months (*Post-Courier* 6/4/2020). This has already affected tourism businesses such as hotels, airlines, travel agents, tour operators, car rentals and restaurants, but all for the good of the country and its citizens to stop the virus from spreading. The PNG health system has existing problems and a COVID-19 outbreak would be very hard to contain due to the country's limited resources, such as doctors, nurses, PPE, isolation and quarantine facilities. Thus, the government is taking drastic measures now to prevent the virus from entering PNG.

Political instability

The tourism industry relies on the government to provide basic infrastructure and, most importantly, security for visitors and travellers (Connell 2005; May 2011; Noonan 23/2/2018; Regan 2017). A stable government with good policies promotes a safer environment for tourists and locals (Kabuni 16/7/2018). Hence, political stability is key to tourism development in any country (*ibid.*). For PNG, it seems that political instability has been a feature since independence in 1975 (*ibid.*). This is mainly to do with a change of government every one or two years, with serving prime ministers' terms being cut short by votes of no confidence. For a prime minister to implement tourism policies, or any another policy, there needs to be consistency in the leadership (*ibid.*), as the prime minister has the power to implement policies and allocate funding (Connell 2005; Kabuni 16/7/2018; May 2011; Noonan 23/2/2018). This was evident when Sir Michael Somare served as prime minister for almost two terms from 2002–11 (Kabuni 16/7/2018; May 2011). From 2004 to 2010, most members of parliament were given K17 million (AU\$7 million) each year for their electoral development funds to build basic infrastructure in their districts and provinces (Noonan 23/2/2018; Regan 2017). The second prime minister to lead PNG for two terms was Mr Peter O'Neill from 2011–19. He was the first prime minister in PNG to build more national infrastructure, such as the upgrading of major roads and airports, including Jacksons International Airport and Kagamuga International Airport in Mount Hagen. He also oversaw the building of major infrastructure in Port Moresby to be ready to host international events such as the 2015 Pacific Games, some matches in the 2017 Rugby League World Cup and the 2018 APEC meeting (Eves 2017;

Noonan 23/2/2018; *Post-Courier* 12/4/2018). However, in the Melanesian context, such political stability can lead to corruption and mismanagement (Kabuni 16/7/2018; Regan 2017). Some politicians, government ministers and department heads can get very rich through corrupt deals such as awarding lucrative government contracts to companies and accepting bribes, money laundering and other corrupt practices when remaining in the government a long time (Dinnen 1997; Regan 2017; Sali 2018). Thus, political stability in PNG is a double-edged sword, bringing both benefits and drawbacks (Regan 2017).

PART 3: STUDY – TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES IN PNG

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, qualitative research was employed. Qualitative data can be examined again and again to answer different research questions (Schwandt 2001). This research used qualitative methods to answer questions about tourism development challenges in PNG.

The qualitative data was collected using desktop research such as searching online databases, websites and digital libraries to find evidence of tourism development constraints in PNG published between January 1990 and March 2020.

These methods were used because they were mostly secondary data and internet-based. Searches were done using the keywords 'tourism development challenges in PNG'. The databases used were Wiley Online Library, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, Google Scholar and Research Gate. A few research articles about PNG tourism issues and challenges were also found in leading international research journals. Searches were also made on organisational and governmental websites, such as those of PNG Tourism Promotion Authority (PNG TPA), PNG National Parliament (PNGNP), SPC Statistics for Development Division, South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the New Zealand and Australian embassies in PNG. The data was analysed using thematic analysis (Knight 2002).

Results

The results were based on the secondary data collected in this paper. The main aim of this paper is to identify issues and challenges that hinder tourism development in PNG. Based on the study data, four major themes

were identified. The first is internal law and order. The second is a lack of positive media publicity overseas, while the third is corruption in government departments. The final theme is a lack of competition in the airline sector.

Table 2. Coding of themes

Initial themes	Finding themes
Safety and security issues	Internal law and order issues
Negative media publicity	PNG needs positive media publicity
Political instability	Systematic corruption in most government departments
High cost of goods and services	Lack of competition in the airline sector
Travel warnings	
Lack of sufficient infrastructure	
Health issues	

Source: Author's research.

Internal law and order issues

Based on the research findings, the main safety and security issues experienced in PNG are due to internal law and order issues. There was nothing to be found about high-risk safety and security concerns related to terrorism or political/religious groups targeting innocent civilians or tourists. According to the articles, some tourists experienced robbery, rape and armed hold-ups, but these were isolated cases, such as the 2010 rape of an Australian tourist in Madang. These types of crimes would be of concern for tourists. In the short history of PNG, there have been no incidents of tourists being bombed in a tour bus or someone going into a hotel and opening fire on tourists and citizens. These kinds of incidents are unheard of in PNG (Nalu 9/6/2019).

PNG needs positive media publicity

In this research, it was found that most of the articles on PNG were about law and order, criminal activities, rape, murder, corruption, stealing and other related issues. Such law and order problems are related to the daily challenges of the PNG government and its citizens. There was little information about criminals targeting tourists. Nonetheless, this media coverage may exacerbate fear among tourists (Nalu 9/6/2019; Sali 2018; Sumb 2019) and deter them from visiting PNG. However, there is hope for PNG tourism through

marketing and promotion in key tourism source markets such as Australia, New Zealand and emerging tourism markets, such as China. In most of the articles reviewed, it was found that PNG is not adequately marketed overseas. For example, PNG tourism commercials were not seen on television stations or in newspapers in Australia; instead, all potential tourists see is media coverage of law and order problems. The PNG TPA needs to aggressively market PNG's tourism products overseas.

Systematic corruption in PNG

It was found in the literature that political stability can be positive or negative. In PNG, political stability can lead to high-level corruption and the misuse of public funds. Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index 2019* ranked PNG 137th out of 180 countries on their corruption rating level (2020). This indicates that corruption in the country is widespread and offenders are professionals within the government sector (Sali 2018). A number of government department members, departmental heads and private sector employees were alleged to have been involved in corruption activities, several of whom have been arrested and charged for the crimes they committed (ibid.). For instance, former Pomio open member Paul Tiensten was found guilty of stealing AU\$4 million in public funds when he was the national planning minister (Durie 1/4/2014). Another example is the governor of the PNG's Western Province, Ati Wobiri, who was found guilty by the Waigani National Court in Port Moresby for conspiring with two others to misappropriate provincial public funds (Sali 2018). Members of parliament are mandated by their people to represent them on the floor of the parliament and bring services to them, but the abuse of this trust by politicians for their own personal benefit is disappointing, to say the least (Regan 2017; Sali 2018). This corruption may be partly due to 'weaknesses in the law and justice sector' (Sali 2018:59). On 18 February 2020, PNG passed the Whistle Blowers Bill to tackle the country's systematic corruption problem, giving hope that levels of corruption in PNG may decrease (Radio New Zealand 18/2/2020).

Lack of competition in the airline sector

Air Niugini's effective monopoly has resulted in high airfares to and from PNG (Lawrence 2017; Pipike 2012; PNG TPA 2011). To facilitate easy travel for international visitors to PNG, the country needs to reform policies such as competition in the air travel

market. For example, in 2001, the introduction of Qantas flights operating between Australia and PNG took Air Niugini to the brink of breakdown because they could not compete (Batten et al. 2009). Fortunately, the PNG government made arrangements with Qantas to bring the two airlines together to form a joint service in 2003, limiting price competition on flights between the two companies (ibid.). Air Niugini's monopoly was disestablished again following the growth of PNG Air from its existing domestic flights to turbo-prop flights between Port Moresby and Cairns in November 2005 (ibid.). This service was expanded in August 2006 to include flights between Port Moresby and Brisbane. While it is a second-level air carrier, PNG Air made a huge impact by attracting a substantial volume of additional demand within the sector (ibid.). There have been major drops in airfares and increased services for international travelers travelling from Australia to PNG and vice versa, which is a direct customer benefit (ibid.). However, customers in other Asia Pacific destinations still pay excessively high airfares because PNG Air does not operate on those routes (Batten et al. 2009; Lawrence 2017).

Findings and discussion

The findings from the analysis showed four major impediments to tourism growth and development. The first and main issue is the one pertaining to law and order, which affects not only tourism development but the daily lives of local people. For instance, places like Madang experience crime almost every day and police lack the resources to contain petty crimes. In 2017, Madang experienced major criminal activities, including armed hold-ups in most shops in town. This is not good for tourism development because tourists prefer to travel to destinations that are free from safety and security concerns.

Secondly, PNG receives negative media publicity both locally and internationally, which has tarnished the image of the country to international tourists. Thus, the perception of PNG among the international source markets is that it is a very dangerous and unsafe destination. In addition, travel warnings posted by foreign countries have a huge impact on the tourism industry in PNG. Foreign missions' advice to their citizens is that PNG is a high-risk area to visit in terms of violent crime, health issues and a lack of basic infrastructure. The research revealed that PNG is doing little to counteract the negative media publicity. In contrast, Fiji experienced a military coup in 2006

but still promoted tourism in their key tourism source markets, such as Australia and New Zealand. Compared to Fiji, PNG has more to offer in terms of tourism activities due to the size of the country and the range of potential tourist destinations, as discussed previously. In addition to the stunning tourism products that can be offered to international tourists, PNG has unique traditional lifestyles that are vibrant and incomparable. PNG has been described as one of the last surviving places on the planet where such cultural authenticity still exists (Basu 2000; PNG TPA 2006). This needs to be exposed and promoted to tourist-generating countries.

The third issue is corruption, which can happen both when the government is stable and unstable in PNG. For example, Sir Michael Somare's government was stable from 2002 to 2011, but there was corruption within the government departments. Similarly, when Peter O'Neill led from 2011 to 2019, there was still corruption and mismanagement. Political stability is a good environment for politicians to misuse funds in PNG, which does little to help the tourism industry in the country develop.

Finally, the fourth impediment to tourism development in PNG is the high cost of goods and services in the country. This includes domestic and international airfares, hotel accommodation, food and beverages, tours and entertainment. Most hotels target Australian business tourists who are able to pay high prices. These are often employees of Australian-owned companies and all expenses are paid by the company. However, some holiday tourists are unable to pay the high cost of hotels in Port Moresby. This makes it hard to attract international holiday travellers to PNG. In addition, domestic and international airfares are very expensive for tourists. It is likely that tourists consider their budget before making travel arrangements and are deterred by high costs.

Conclusion

This paper examines the constraints of tourism development in PNG. In doing so, it first provided a background on tourism in PNG, then discussed key known challenges to tourism development, as revealed by the literature. It then reported the research findings of barriers preventing tourists from travelling to PNG. The issues found include internal law and order problems, a lack of positive media publicity, systematic corruption and a lack of competition in the airline

sector. The paper highlights that PNG has beautiful and exotic tourism products but lacks positive publicity. Better marketing of PNG to key tourism source markets is one strategy that could counteract negative media publicity, but to date, PNG TPA has not done enough to successfully achieve that. In contrast, Fiji actively promotes tourism in key source markets, an approach lacking in PNG. Consequently, the number of tourist arrivals to PNG is low compared to other Pacific Island countries. Low tourist visitation to PNG's prime tourism sites could be attributed to the challenges discussed previously, which would need to be thoroughly addressed in order to improve PNG's tourism sector.

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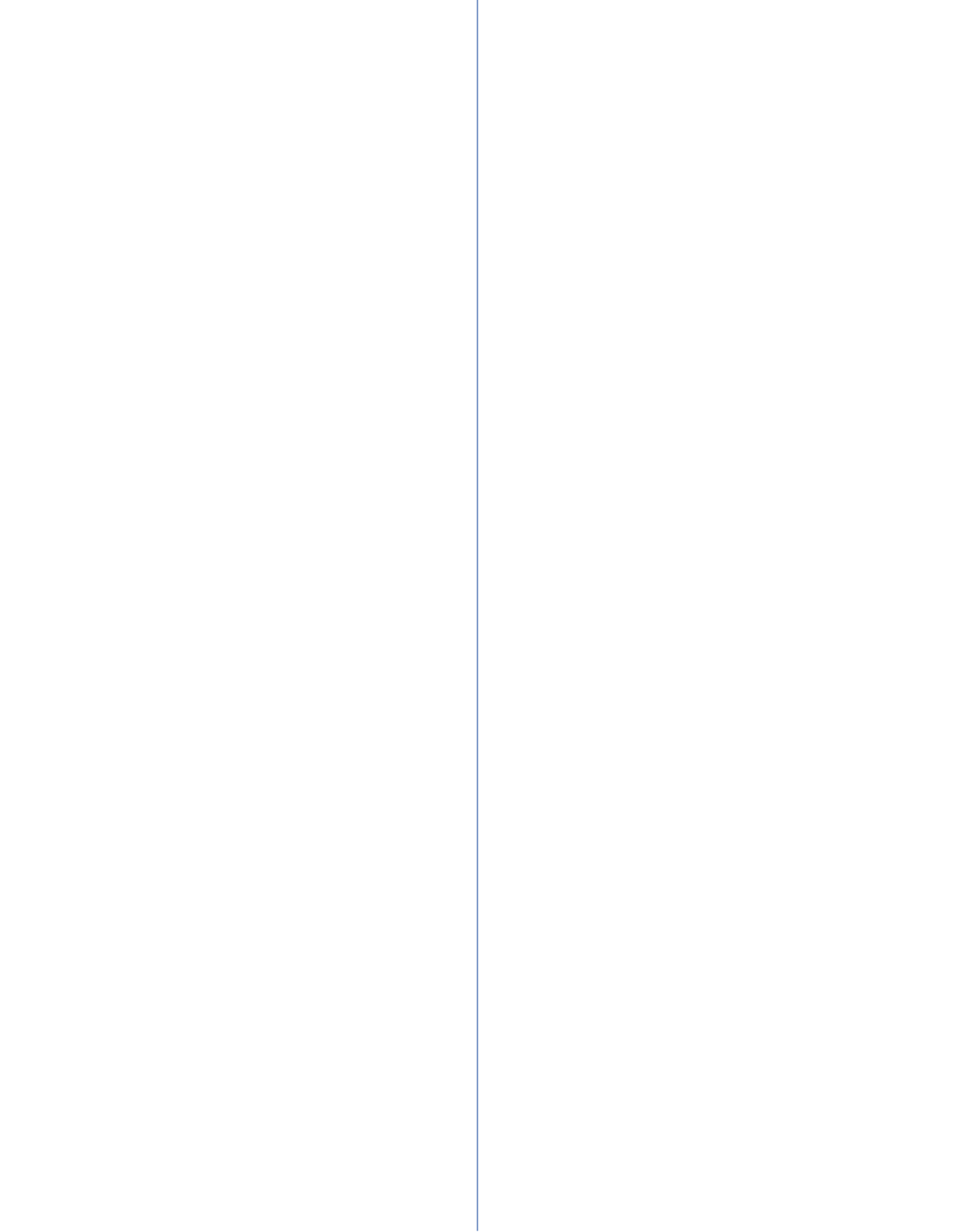
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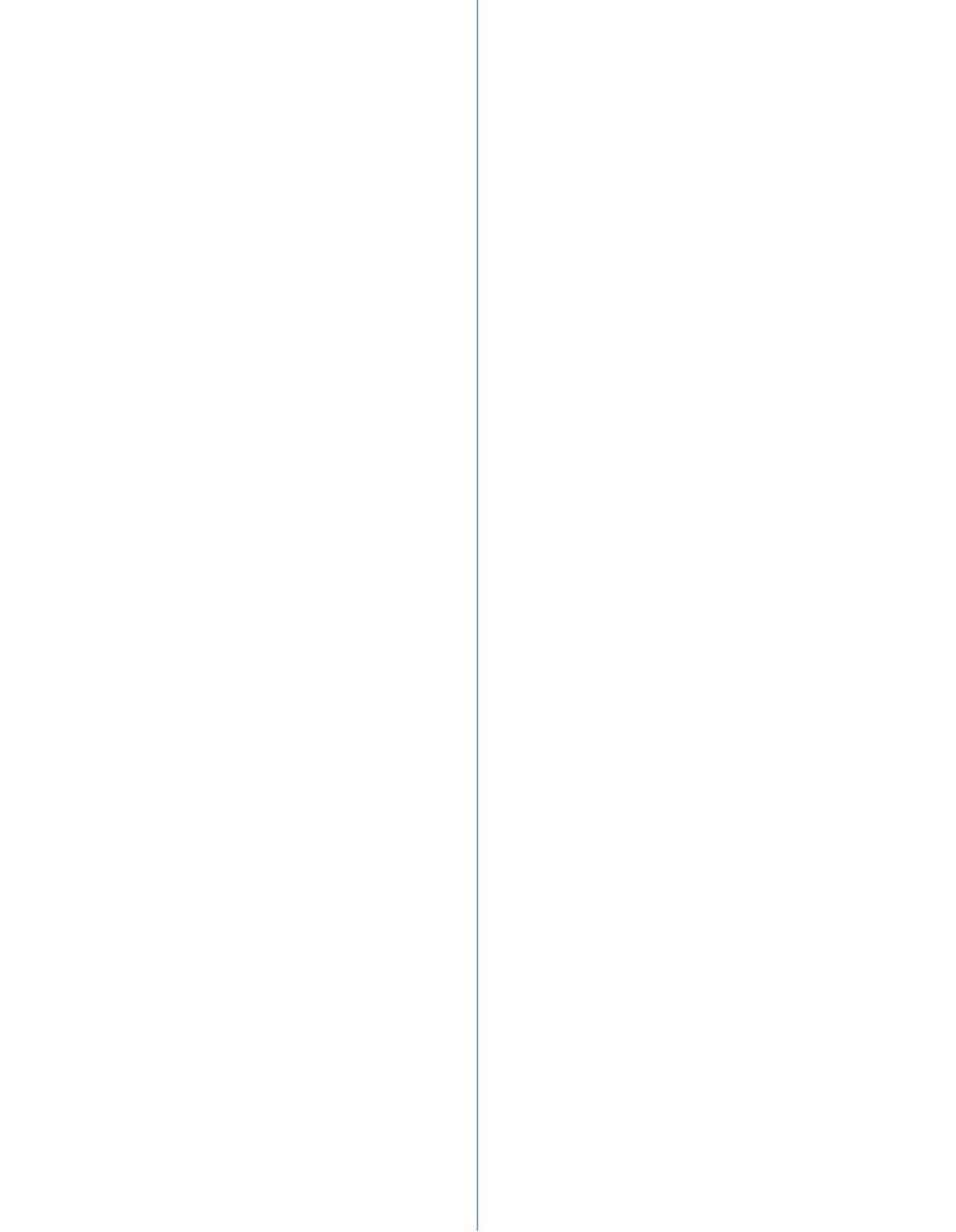
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